

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method comprising:

(a) labeling at least one first push button among a plurality of push buttons

5 located adjacent a front portion of a first shelf supported in a cabinet, with first button indicia, wherein the first button indicia corresponds to a first item storage location in supporting connection with the first storage shelf;

(b) storing at least one of a first type medical item in the first item storage location;

10 (c) providing a first manual input corresponding to the first type medical item through one of at least two input devices operative and available to receive the manual input, one of the at least two input devices including the first push button;

15 (d) removing at least one of the first type medical item from the first item storage location.

2. The method according to claim 1 and prior to step (b) further comprising:

(e) labeling the first item storage location with the first location identifying indicia.

3. The method according to claim 2 wherein in step (a) the first button indicia
5 comprises a self-adhesive label, and wherein in step (e) the location identifying indicia comprises a self-adhesive label.

4. The method according to claim 3 wherein the self-adhesive labels in each of steps (a) and (e) comprise the same external color.

5. The method according to claim 1 wherein in step (c) a terminal accessible
10 externally relative to the cabinet comprises another of the at least two input devices.

6. The method according to claim 5 wherein the front portion of the first storage shelf includes a plurality of visual indicators, wherein each of the plurality of buttons has a corresponding visual indicator, and wherein in step (c) the first manual input is provided through the terminal, and prior to step (d) further comprising:

15 (e) activating a first visual indicator corresponding to the at least one first push button.

7. The method according to claim 6 wherein the first storage shelf comprises a first shelf display, and prior to step (d) further comprising:

(f) providing manually at least one first numerical input through the terminal corresponding to a first quantity of the first type medical item;

5 (g) providing a first visual output through the first shelf display corresponding to the first quantity.

8. The method according to claim 7 wherein in step (g) the first visual output is a numerical output.

9. The method according to claim 7 wherein the first shelf further comprises a take
10 indicator, and prior to step (d) further comprising during at least a portion of performance of step (g), activating the take indicator.

10. The method according to claim 7 and further comprising:

labeling at least one second push button among the plurality of push buttons with
second button indicia, wherein the second button indicia corresponds to a second
15 item storage location in supporting connection with the first storage shelf;

storing at least one of a second type medical item in the second item storage location;

providing manually at least one second numerical input through the terminal corresponding to a second quantity of the second type medical item;

5 touching the at least one first push button wherein step (g) is performed responsive to such touching.

11. The method according to claim 10 and further comprising:

activating a second visual indicator corresponding to the at least one second push button responsive to at least one manual input to the terminal;

10 touching the at least one push button;

providing a second visual output through the first shelf display corresponding to the second quantity.

12. The method according to claim 11 and further comprising:

removing the second quantity of the second type medical item from the second storage location.

13. The method according to claim 11 wherein activating the first and second indicators comprises illuminating the respective indicators.

5 14. The method according to claim 12 and further comprising:

(h) labeling the first item storage location with first location identifying indicia corresponding to the first button indicia;

(i) labeling the second item storage location with second location identifying indicia corresponding to the second button indicia.

10 15. The method according to claim 14 wherein step (a) comprises applying a self-adhesive label having a first distinctive visual characteristic to the at least one first push button, and wherein step (h) comprises applying a self-adhesive label having the first visual characteristic to the first item storage location; and

15 wherein labeling the at least one second push button with second push button indicia comprises applying a self-adhesive label having a second distinctive visual characteristic to the at least one second push button, and wherein step (i)

comprises applying a self-adhesive label having the second visual characteristic to the second item storage location.

16. The method according to claim 15 wherein the first and second distinctive visual characteristics comprise different colors.

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17. The method according to claim 16 wherein the cabinet comprises a plurality of shelves, and a plurality of doors, wherein each door is operative to control access to at least one shelf, and wherein a first door controls access to the first shelf, and further comprising:

10 changing the first door from a locked to an unlocked condition responsive to providing the at least one manual input to the terminal in step (c).

18. The method according to claim 17 and further comprising activating at least one door indicator corresponding to the first door, responsive to providing the at least one manual input to the terminal in step (c).

15 19. The method according to claim 18 wherein activating the at least one door indicator comprises illuminating an indicator on the cabinet which is visible through a light guide extending through the first door.

20. The method according to claim 7 and further comprising storing data corresponding to the taking of the first quantity of the first type medical item in a data store.

21. The method according to claim 20 wherein the first shelf further comprises a first numerical keypad adjacent the first portion thereof, and further comprising:

- 5 (h) labeling at least one second push button among the plurality of push buttons with second button indicia, wherein the second button indicia corresponds to a second item storage location in supporting connection with the first shelf;
- (i) storing at least one of a second type medical item in the second item
10 storage location;
- (j) touching the at least one second push button;
- (k) inputting a second quantity through at least one input to the first numerical keypad;
- (l) providing a second visual output through the first shelf display
15 corresponding to the second quantity;

(m) removing the second quantity of the second type medical item from the second storage location.

22. The method according to claim 21 and further comprising:

(n) storing data in a data store representative of the taking of the second quantity of the second type medical item.

23. The method according to claim 22 wherein the first shelf comprises a clear indicator adjacent the front portion of the first shelf, and prior to step (m) further comprising, providing at least one incorrect input through the at least one push button or the keypad, and providing a manual input through the clear indicator which is operative to clear the incorrect input.

24. The method according to claim 22 and further comprising:

activating a second visual indicator corresponding to the at least one second push button responsive to performance of step (j).

25. The method according to claim 24 and further comprising:

closing a first door in supporting connection with the cabinet overlying the first shelf;

providing at least one exit input to the terminal;

locking the first door responsive to the at least one exit input.

5 26. The method according to claim 25 and further comprising:

unlocking the first door through operation of a mechanical lock.

27. The method according to claim 5 wherein the front portion of the first storage shelf includes a plurality of first visual indicators, wherein each of the plurality of buttons has a corresponding visual indicator, and further comprising:

10 (e) unlocking at least one first door in supporting connection with the cabinet and overlying the first shelf responsive to at least one input to the terminal;

(f) opening the at least one first door;

providing the input in step (c) by touching the at least one first push button on the first shelf after opening the first door.

28. The method according to claim 27 wherein the front portion of the first storage shelf includes a first numerical keypad, and further comprising after providing the input in step (c) by touching the first push button;

(g) inputting a first quantity through at least one manual input to the first keypad.

29. The method according to claim 28 and further comprising:

recording the taking of the first quantity of the first type medical item in a data store.

30. The method according to claim 28 wherein the front portion of the first shelf further comprises a first shelf display, and further comprising:

displaying the first quantity through a first visual output through the first shelf display.

31. The method according to claim 30 wherein the first portion further includes a clear indicator, and further comprising:

providing an incorrect input responsive to either touching an incorrect push button or providing an incorrect quantity through the numerical keypad;

clearing the incorrect input by touching the clear indicator.

32. The method according to claim 27 and further comprising:

- 5 (g) labeling at least one second push button with second button indicia, the second button indicia corresponding to a second storage location on the first shelf;
- (h) storing at least one of a second type medical item in the second item storage location;
- 10 (i) touching the at least one second push button to indicate the taking of at least one second type medical item from the second item storage location.

33. The method according to claim 32 and further comprising:

labeling the at least one first push button and the first item storage location with first corresponding visual indicia, and labeling the at least one second push button

and the second item storage location with second corresponding visual indicia
visually different from the first corresponding visual indicia.

34. The method according to claim 27 wherein in step (e) the at least one input to the
terminal comprises a user identifying input, and wherein the at least one door unlocks responsive
5 to the user's predetermined authorization to access medical items stored in the cabinet behind the
at least one door.

35. The method according to claim 34 wherein the cabinet comprises a plurality of
shelves each having the recited features of the first shelf, and wherein at least one shelf is
positioned behind a separate door from a door controlling access to the first shelf.

10 36. The method according to claim 34 wherein the plurality of shelves include at least
one stationary shelf and at least one pullout shelf, and wherein the first shelf comprises a pullout
shelf, and prior to step (d) further comprising extending the first shelf outward from the cabinet.

37. A method comprising:

providing a cabinet including:

15 a plurality of shelves, each shelf including a first item storage location and
a second item storage location, a plurality of buttons on a front portion of

the shelf, a plurality of visual indicators on the front portion, each visual indicator corresponding to one of the plurality of buttons, a numerical keypad on the front portion, and a shelf display on the front portion;

5 a plurality of lockable doors, each door having associated therewith a visual door indicator, wherein each door controls access to at least one shelf, wherein each door is in operative connection with a mechanical and an electronic unlocking mechanism;

providing a terminal having at least one input device that is accessible externally relative to the cabinet;

10 labeling a first button on a shelf with first button indicia comprising a self-adhesive label having a first visual characteristic;

labeling a first storage location supported on the shelf corresponding to the first button with a self-adhesive label having the first visual characteristic;

15 labeling a second button on a shelf with second button indicia comprising a self-adhesive label having a second visual characteristic different from the first visual characteristic;

labeling a second storage location supported on the shelf corresponding to the second button with a self-adhesive label having the second visual characteristic;

placing a first type medical item in the first storage location;

placing a second type medical item in the second storage location;

5 providing at least one first type input to the terminal, the at least one first type input not indicative of a particular type medical item;

unlocking at least one door through operation of an electronic unlocking mechanism responsive to the first type input to the terminal;

10 providing an indication of the at least one door being unlocked through activation of at least one corresponding door indicator;

touching the first push button;

inputting a first quantity through at least one manual input to the keypad;

displaying the first quantity on the shelf display corresponding to the first push button;

taking the first quantity of the first type medical item from the first storage location;

locking the at least one door;

5 recording the taking of the first quantity of the first type medical item in a data store;

providing at least one second type input to the terminal, the at least one second type input being indicative of the first type medical item and a second quantity;

unlocking the first door controlling access to a shelf including the first storage location through operation of an electronic unlocking mechanism;

10 providing an indication of the unlocking of the first door through activation of a corresponding door indicator;

activating the visual indicator associated with the first push button;

displaying the second quantity through the shelf display on the shelf including the first storage location;

taking the second quantity of the first type medical item from the first storage location;

locking the at least one door; and

recording the taking of the second quantity of the first type medical item in a data store.

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